



Mealtime Mentoring

The Truth about Foods

When I plan menus I have difficulty knowing how to classify some foods using Canada's Food Guide? Help!

Specific criteria have been developed for child care facilities to help ensure that well-balanced, nutritious meals are served. The criteria are based on Canada's Food Guide. At times classifying foods within the Food Guide can be tricky. The examples below help to clarify where certain foods fit.

Vegetables and Fruit Group

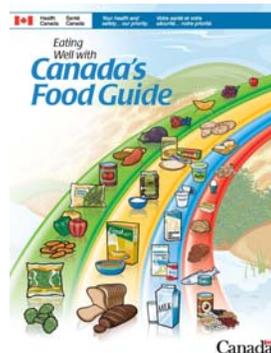
- Corn is a vegetable and fruit choice, not a "starch" or grain product.
- Pumpkin and sweet potatoes are a vegetable and fruit choice.
- Dried fruit is a vegetable and fruit choice.
- Potatoes are a vegetable. While they are often served instead of rice or pasta, they are not grain products.
- Homemade baked potato wedges are a vegetable and fruit choice. Frozen French fries, hashbrowns and potato chips are not.
- 100% juice is a vegetable and fruit choice. In child care facilities, use unsweetened juice and limit it to 3 times a week.

Grain Products Group

- Rice and pasta are grain products. Although they may be served in place of potatoes at a meal they do belong to a different food group.
- Muffins and loaves such as banana bread are grain products. All granola bars and cookies are limited foods.

Milk and Alternatives Group

- Cheese, including string cheese, is a milk and alternative choice.
- Processed cheese slices are milk and alternative choices. Cheese spread and cream cheese are considered condiments.
- Pudding and custard made with milk are milk and alternative choices.
- Yogurt drinks and tubes are milk and alternative choices. Dips made with yogurt are considered condiments.



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Meat and Alternatives Group

- Eggs are a meat alternative choice.
- Nuts and seeds including peanut butter are meat alternatives. Chocolate hazelnut spread is low in protein content and high in sugar so it is not a meat alternative.
- Dried beans, peas and lentils are meat alternatives.
- Deli meats are a meat and alternative choice. Low fat and low salt varieties are most desirable.

Serving Sizes

A food must provide one half to a full serving size from Canada's Food Guide to count as a food group serving.

Limited Foods

According to Canada's Food Guide, there are certain foods that should be consumed in limited quantities. For child care menus, these should be limited to three choices a week. Limited foods include:

- French fries and hash browns,
- salty snacks such as nacho chips, potato chips, pretzels and party mix,
- all cake, including puffed wheat cake and crispy rice cake,
- all cookies, including homemade,
- pastries and doughnuts,
- cinnamon buns,
- all granola and cereal bars including homemade bars,

- ice cream and all frozen desserts including frozen yogurt, ice milk, and milkshakes,
- fruit flavoured drinks, beverages and cocktails,
- soft drinks,
- sport drinks,
- sweetened cold drinks, including lemonade, iced tea and slush type drinks,
- sweetened hot drinks such as hot chocolate,
- marshmallows,
- jelly desserts with or without fruit,
- fruit snacks and roll ups, and
- popsicles.

Avoid foods that are sticky, chewy, and high in sugar. They can increase the risk of tooth decay.

Condiments

Condiments provide very little nutrients. They do not count as food group choices or as limited foods. These foods include: cheese spread, cream, cream cheese, whipped cream, whipped topping, seasoning and spices, ketchup, mustard and relish, salsa, pickles, jam, syrup, salad dressing and dips, pickles, chocolate hazelnut spread.



Helping you provide healthy food and a positive eating environment in early learning and child care settings.